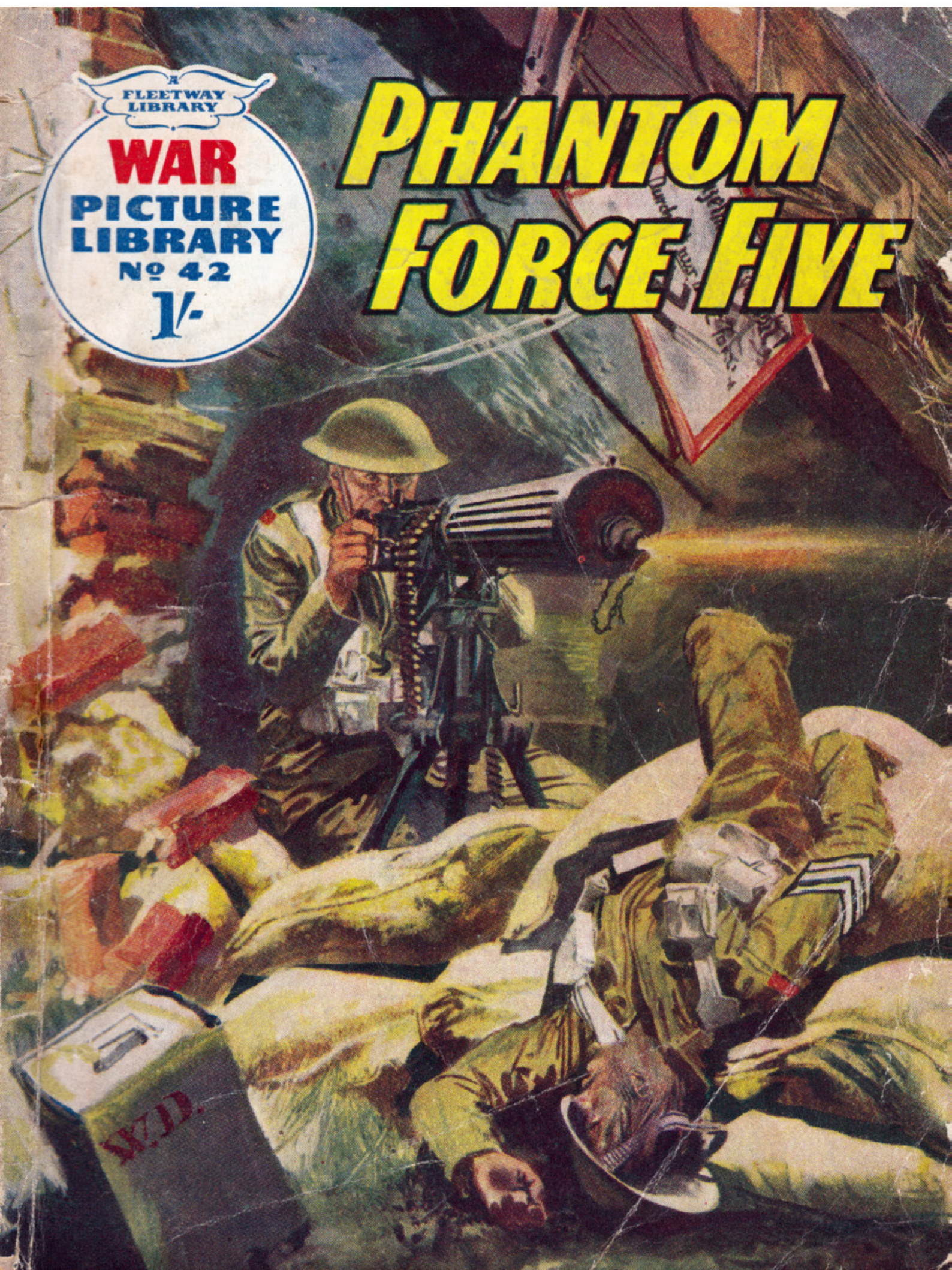


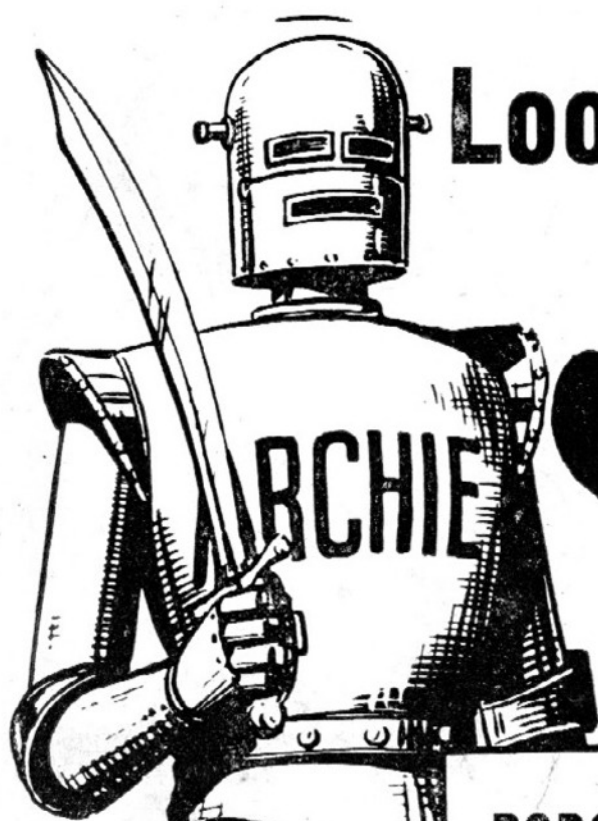
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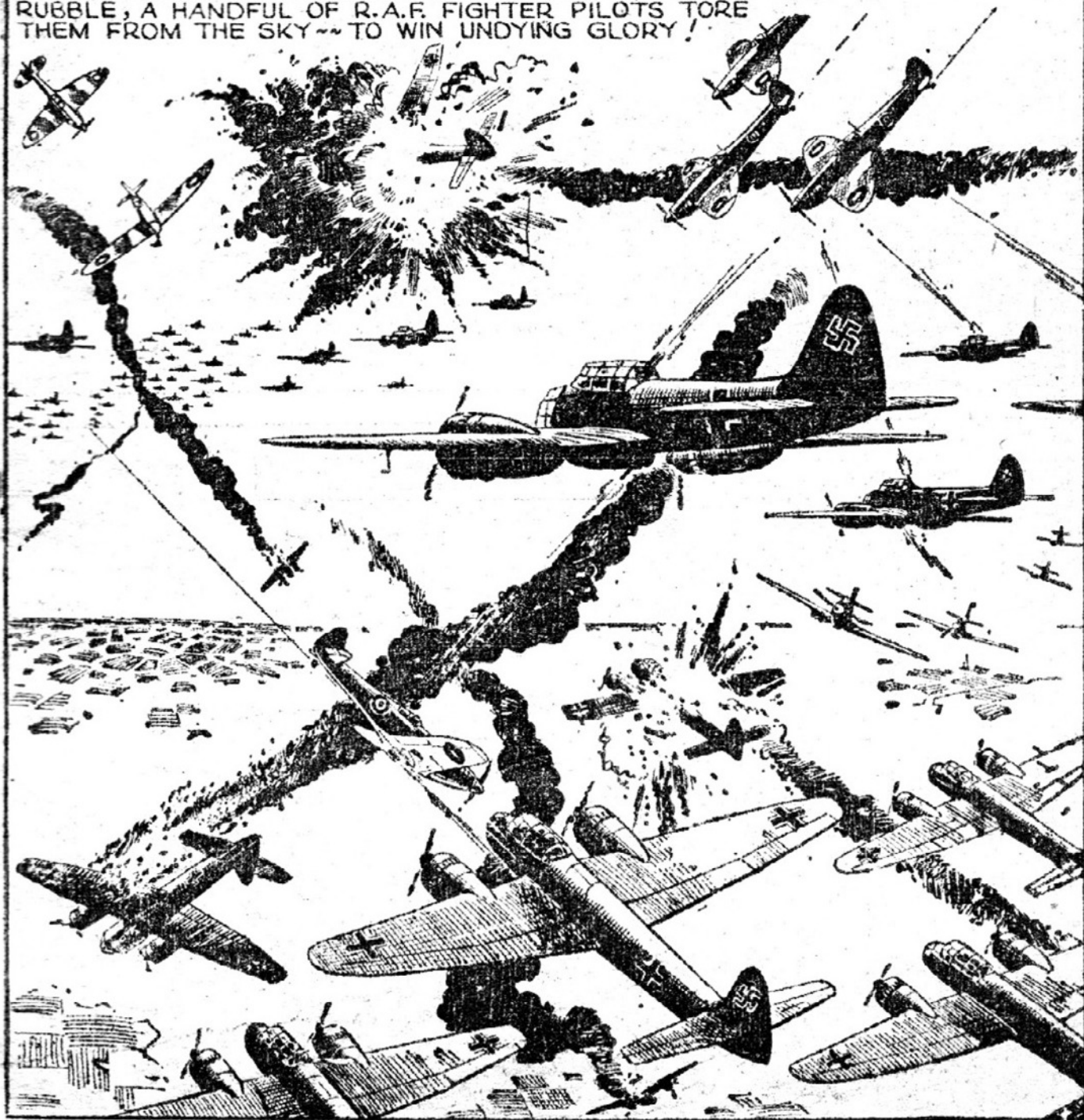
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FIVE STAR WEEKLY



PHANTOM FORCE FIVE

EUROPE LAY HELPLESS IN THE SHADOW OF THE SWASTIKA!
IN FOUR SHORT WEEKS OF *BLITZKRIEG*, FAST-MOVING GERMAN ARMoured COLUMNS HAD BEATEN FRANCE, BELGIUM AND HOLLAND INTO THE DUST OF DEFEAT. ONLY BRITAIN REMAINED UNCONQUERED AND WHEN THE BOMBER HORDES OF THE VAUNTED LUFTWAFFE POURED ACROSS THE CHANNEL TO POUND THE PROUD ISLE TO RUBBLE, A HANDFUL OF R.A.F. FIGHTER PILOTS TORE THEM FROM THE SKY ~ TO WIN UNDYING GLORY!



Chapter 1 PRELUDE TO ASSAULT

SO CRIPPLING WERE THE GERMAN AIR ARMADA LOSSES THAT THE WHOLE INVASION OF BRITAIN HAD TO BE ABANDONED. FURIOUS AT BEING BALKED OF HIS PREY, ADOLF HITLER COMMANDED HIS GREY-CLAD ARMIES TO MARCH AGAIN -- SOUTH TO AUSTRIA ... AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA!



... THE ILL-ARMED AND OUTNUMBERED YUGOSLAVS FOUGHT GALLANTLY BUT HOPELESSLY AGAINST THE MASSIVE NAZI MILITARY MACHINE!

IN FIVE DAYS IT WAS OVER. YUGOSLAVIA WAS DEVASTATED AND DEFEATED ... BUT THE VICTORIOUS GERMANS DID NOT STOP. ON THEY SWEEPED SOUTH ... INTO GREECE!



IN A DEVOURING WAVE OF FLAME AND FURY, THE GERMANS THRUST INTO THE HEART OF GREECE. THE TINY GREEK ARMY FOUGHT BACK COURAGEOUSLY ~ BUT HOPELESSLY. **THEN HELP CAME!** BRITISH WARSHIPS DASHED NORTH FROM EGYPT, LADEN WITH TROOPS ...



BUT THE BRITISH AID WAS TOO LITTLE ~ AND TOO LATE! ALL IT COULD DO WAS TO SLOW DOWN THE IRRESISTIBLE NAZI DIVISIONS ...

LATEST ORDERS FROM H.Q., REGGIE. WE'VE GOT TO HOLD JERRY OFF THIS POSITION UNTIL MIDNIGHT ~ THEN PULL BACK ABOUT FIVE MILES. THE WHOLE BRIGADE IS FORCED TO WITHDRAW ~ OR IT'LL BE OUTFLANKED AND SURROUNDED!



Phantom Force Five

IN THREE WEEKS OF SAVAGE FIGHTING, THE GREEKS AND BRITISH WERE SLOWLY FORCED SOUTHWARDS UNTIL THEIR BACKS WERE TO THE SEA -- AND ONLY ONE MORE COMMAND COULD BE GIVEN -- **EVACUATE GREECE!**

SAME OLD STORY -- THE NAVY HAS TO COME TO PULL YOU PONGOS OUT OF THE SOUP.

BROWNED OFF AT MISSING YOUR AFTERNOON'S FISHING. EH, MATE? WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US, ANYWAY?

NEXT STOP, THE SUNNY JEWEL OF THE MED -- **CRETE!**



AND EVEN WHILE THE BRITISH WARSHIPS WERE PICKING UP THE BATTLE WEARY SOLDIERS, THE GERMANS WERE ALSO TALKING OF CRETE -- AT AN ARMY PLANNING CONFERENCE ...

THE GLORIOUS WEHRMACHT HAS DRIVEN THE GREEKS AND BRITISH OUT LIKE RABBLE -- THEY ARE DEMORALISED! NOW WE MUST STRIKE HARD AND FAST TO KEEP THEM RUNNING! OUR NEXT OBJECTIVE IS CRETE -- AND THEN GERMANY WILL HAVE A DAGGER AIMED AT THE SUEZ CANAL! PLANS FOR INVADING CRETE WILL BE MADE AT ONCE!



BUT THE ALLIES, AS WELL, KNEW THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SMALL ROCKY ISLAND BETWEEN GREECE AND ALEXANDRIA. AT BRITISH MIDDLE EAST H.Q.

GENTLEMEN~~ AT THE MOMENT OUR FORCES FROM GREECE ARE LANDING IN CRETE. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE ENEMY WILL ATTACK AS SOON AS HE CAN! BUT WE MUST HOLD OUT THERE FOR AT LEAST THREE WEEKS!



THE GENERAL'S EYES SWEEP THE RING OF GRAVE FACES ABOUT HIM ...



IN THAT TIME, REINFORCEMENTS WILL REACH THE CANAL ZONE FROM ENGLAND AND HOLD IT AGAINST ANY GERMAN THRUST FROM CRETE. BUT IN THE MEANTIME, EVERY MAN WHO CAN BE SPARED MUST BE SENT TO CRETE TO DEFEND IT!

THE ORDERS WENT OUT~~ AND THE ARMY CAMPS IN THE ZONE WERE COMBED FOR MEN NOT ON ESSENTIAL DUTIES. THAT VERY AFTERNOON IT REACHED A YOUNG, BROAD-SHOULDERED INFANTRY OFFICER WHO HAD BEEN IN TRANSIT TO THE FAR EAST...

SO THAT'S THE POSITION, LIEUTENANT CARTER. YOU WILL BE IN COMMAND OF THE MEN I HAVE RAKED UP TO SEND TO CRETE. YOUR POSTING TO THE FAR EAST WILL HAVE TO WAIT TILL THIS SHOW IS OVER!



IT SOUNDS AS IF IT'LL BE WORTH THE DELAY, SIR!

Phantom Force Five

BUT AS HE FOLLOWED THE MAJOR OUT, THE ENTHUSIASM WAS SHOCKED FROM LIEUTENANT CARTER'S KEEN GREY EYES -- AS HE SAW THE MEN HE WAS TO LEAD INTO ACTION!

HMMM! THEY DON'T LOOK AS IF THEY'VE HAD A WEEK'S COMBAT SERVICE, BETWEEN THEM, SIR!

NOT EVEN A DAY, MISTER CARTER! THEY'VE ALL BEEN STOREMEN AND CLERKS SINCE THEY ARRIVED IN THE MIDDLE EAST! WELL, THAT TRUCK WILL TAKE YOU TO THE DOCKSIDE NOW, SO THEY'RE ALL YOURS!



CLIVE'S RUGGED FEATURES SET HARD WITH GRIM DETERMINATION. THESE MEN WERE LITTLE BETTER THAN RAW RECRUITS -- AND HE HAD TO LEAD THEM INTO ACTION WHERE THEY'D BE UP AGAINST SOME OF GERMANY'S TOUGHEST TROOPS!

CORPORAL WHITE, SENIOR N.C.O., SIR -- I'VE CHECKED ALL THEIR RIFLES, NO BIRD'S NESTS DOWN THE BARRELS!

THANK YOU, CORPORAL. NOW GET 'EM LOADED INTO THE LORRY -- WE MOVE OFF IN TWO MINUTES!



Phantom Force Five

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THERE WAS AN UNTIDY SCRAMBLE ON TO THE LORRY AS THE CORPORAL SNAPPED AN ORDER ... AND ABOVE THE CLATTER OF BOOTS AND WEAPONS, CLIVE HEARD THE MURMUR OF GRUMBLING VOICES ...



MOTOR TORPEDO BOATS WERE BUSY LOADING STORES AND TROOPS IN ALEXANDRIA HARBOUR WHEN THE TRUCK ARRIVED. WITHIN TEN MINUTES CLIVE HAD BEEN ALLOCATED A BOAT -- AND HIS MEN FILED ABOARD ...



Phantom Force Five

SOON AFTERWARDS A SMALL FLEET OF HEAVILY LADEN M.T.B.'S LEFT ON A JOURNEY THAT BECAME A LIVING NIGHTMARE TO THE CLOSELY PACKED TROOPS ON BOARD: THE BOATS WALLOWED AND ROLLED SICKENINGLY WITH EVERY WAVE IN THE NEXT FORTY-EIGHT HOURS OF WRETCHED AGONY... UNTIL FINALLY ...

LUMME, WE'RE THERE! GOOD OLD DRY LAND AGAIN AT LAST!

YOUR LADS SEEM REAL ANXIOUS TO GET ASHORE, CLIVE.

ONE THING'S CERTAIN -- BY THE LOOK OF 'EM THEY'LL FIGHT DARNED HARD TO STAY ON THE ISLAND, RATHER THAN DO THAT TRIP AGAIN!

THE BOATS CURVED IN AS CLOSE AS THEY DARED... AND THE TROOPS WADED ASHORE THROUGH THE FOAMING SURF. A BEACH CONTROL OFFICER MET CLIVE...

LIEUTENANT-- FROM NOW ON YOUR OUTFIT IS 'FORCE FIVE'. YOU'RE TO TAKE UP A DEFENSIVE POSITION ON KASOVANI AIRFIELD, TEN MILES NORTH.

VERY GOOD, SIR. THE MEN NEED A DECENT MARCH TO GIVE 'EM THEIR LAND LEGS BACK AGAIN!



Phantom Force Five

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THREE HOURS OF TRAMPING OVER ROCKY HILL PATHS TOOK THE RUBBER OUT OF THE MEN'S LEGS... AND PUT NEW GRUMBLES ON THEIR TONGUES!

COR, CHALKY, HE'S LED US STRAIGHT AS A DIE, OVER GROUND A MOUNTAIN GOAT WOULDN'T LIKE! WHY DIDN'T WE STICK TO THE ROAD?

BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN US TWICE AS LONG, TOSH -- AND ANYWAY, WE'RE THERE NOW, THE AIRFIELD'S JUST AHEAD!

ALL AROUND THE AIRFIELD MEN WERE DIGGING DEFENCE POSTS -- AND AS 'FORCE FIVE' MARCHED UP, A HAWK-FACED INFANTRY COLONEL RACED OVER THE TARMAC IN A JEEP...

CARTER, SIR -- WITH THIRTY MEN. WE'RE 'FORCE FIVE'!

GLAD TO HAVE YOU, LADDIE. I'M COMMANDING THE AIRFIELD DEFENCES. WE'RE TO HOLD IT AS LONG AS OUR PLANES NEED IT -- AND THEN MAKE SURE JERRY CAN'T USE IT!



CLIVE FOLLOWED THE COLONEL'S SWEEPING HAND ...

THERE'S A HUNDRED YARD GAP OVER THERE BETWEEN AN AUSTRALIAN COMPANY AND ONE OF MY UNITS. YOU PUT YOUR FORCE THERE!

WE'LL FILL UP THE HOLE, SIR -- CORPORAL, GET THE MEN MOVING!

AS THEY REACHED THEIR POSITIONS, CLIVE SITED THE SLIT TRENCHES -- AND THE "FORCE FIVE" MEN BEGAN TO DIG. THE BATTLE SEASONED AUSTRALIANS ON THE RIGHT TOOK ONE SCORNFUL LOOK AT THEIR INEXPERIENCED EFFORTS ...

STONE THE BLOOMING CROWS! JUST LOOK AT THAT BUNCH OF GREEN POMMIES. COBBERS, WE'VE GOT A RIGHT OUTFIT NEXT DOOR!

IF THEY SHOOT LIKE THEY DIG IN, THE JERRIES WILL WIPE THE FLOOR WITH 'EM!



CLIVE CARTER WORKED LIKE TEN MEN THAT DAY. HE WAS EVERYWHERE -- COMMANDING, ADVISING, EVEN HELPING, UNTIL HIS MUSCLES WERE BITING KNOTS OF TORTURE. THANKS ONLY TO HIM WERE THE DEFENCE POSTS ANY GOOD AT ALL ...

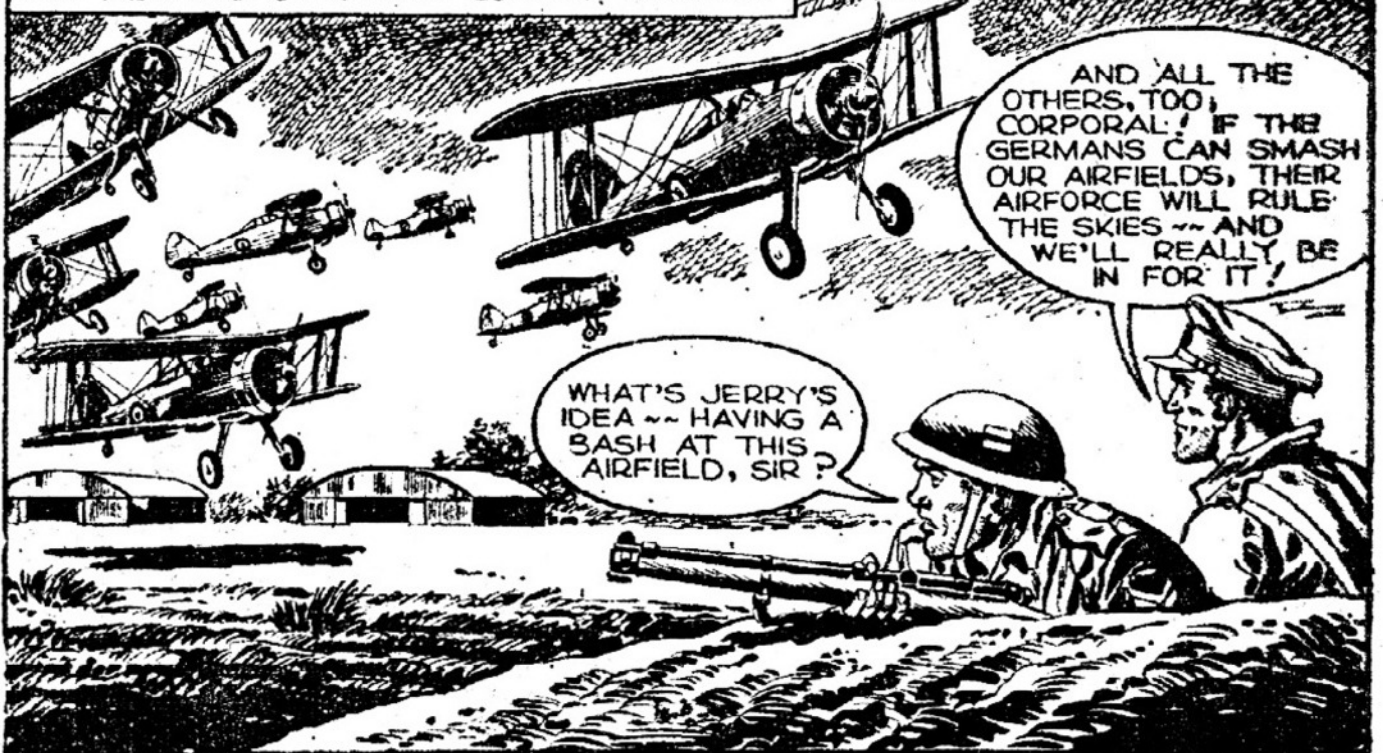


FOR THE NEXT THIRTY-SIX HOURS THEY CROUCHED IN THEIR CRAMPED TRENCHES ... WAITING ... WAITING ... UNTIL THEIR NERVES WERE SCRAPED RAW WITH TENSION ... **THEN SUDDENLY IT HAPPENED!**

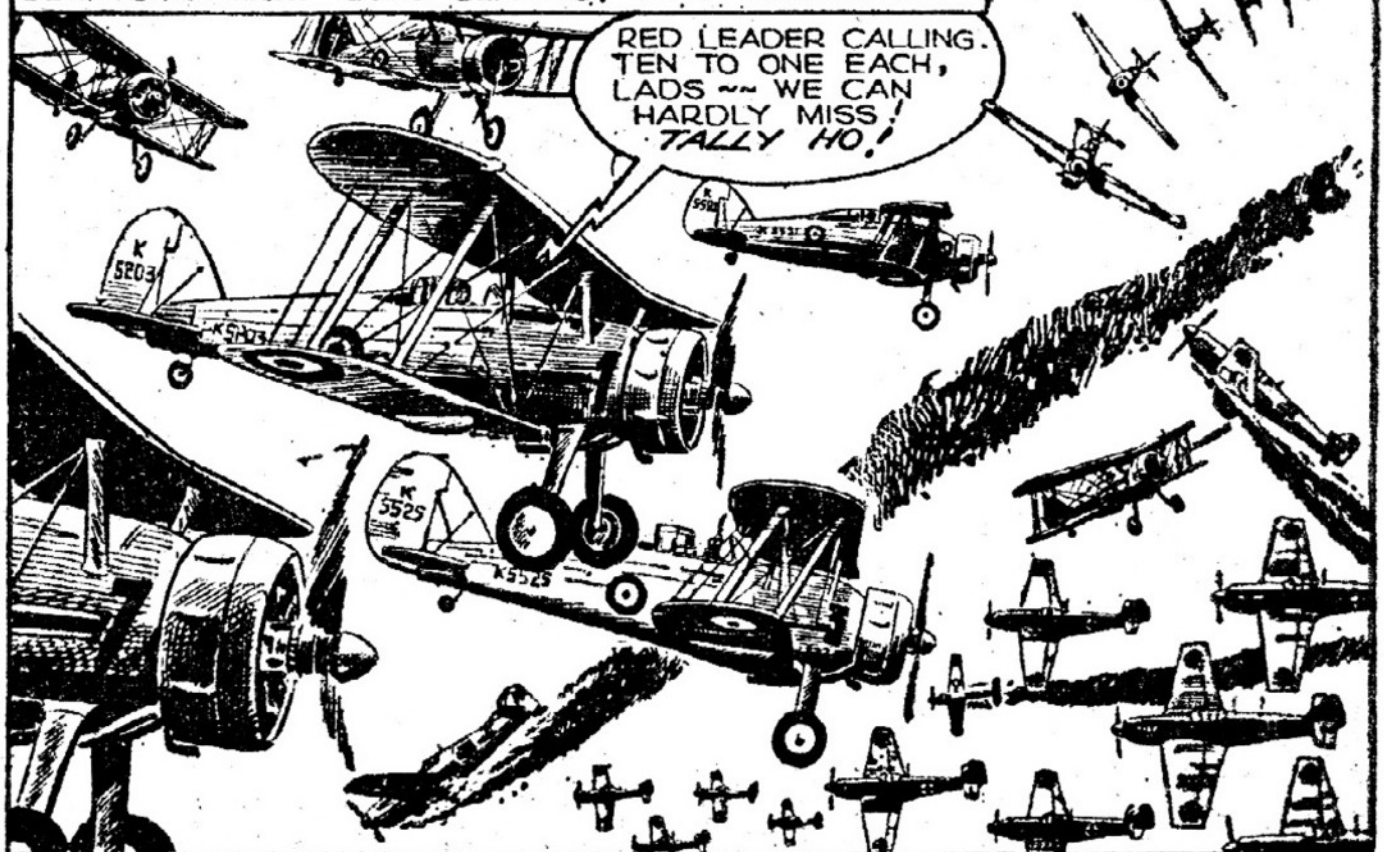


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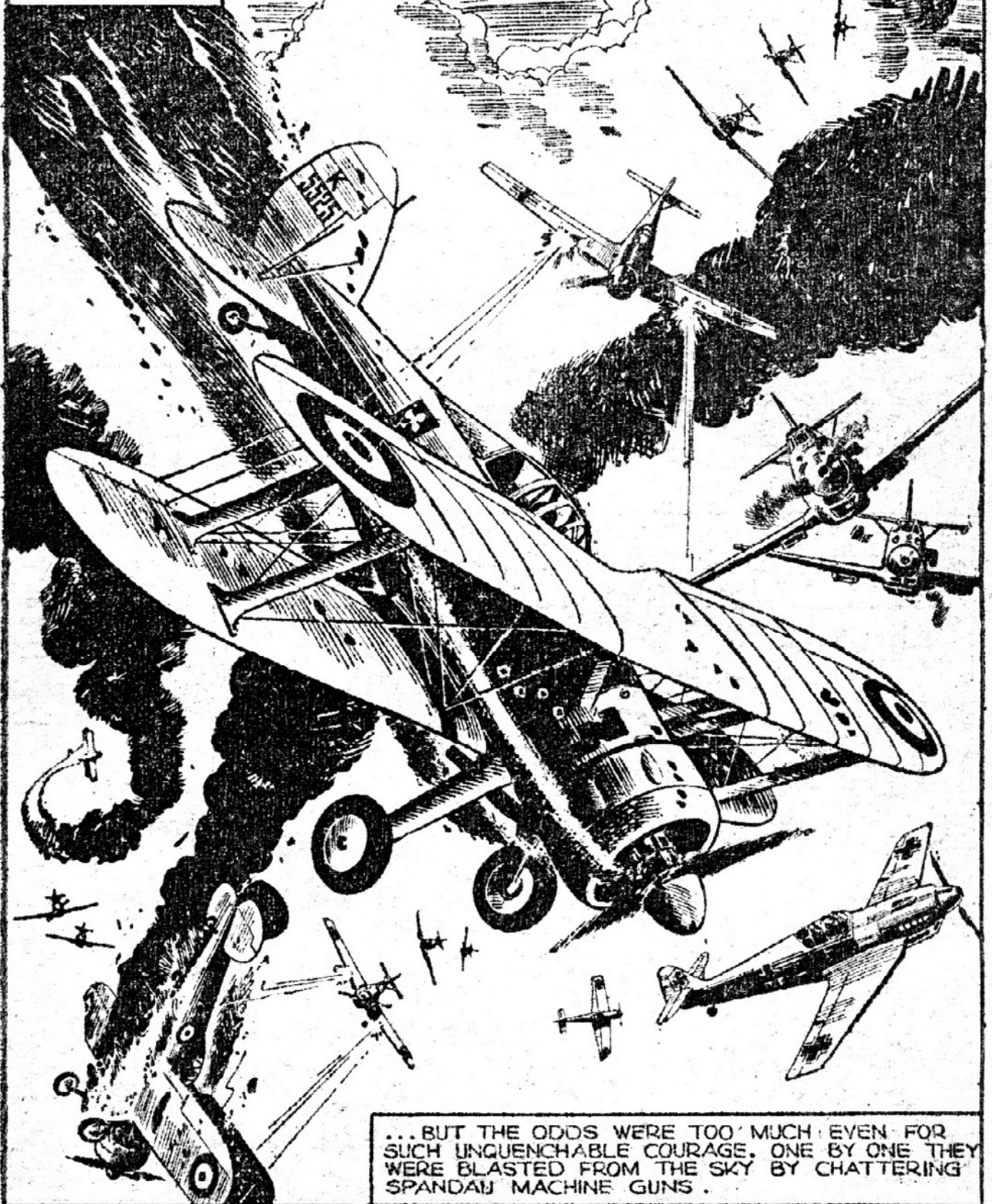
NINE GLADIATORS SPED DOWN THE RUNWAY, ENGINES THUNDERING WITH FULL UNLEASHED POWER... THEY LIFTED CLEAR, THE DAWN SUN GLINTING ON BROWN COATED WINGS...



AND THEN THEY CAME! A FLEET OF SLEEK, BLACK GERMAN ME 109 FIGHTERS HALF A MILE WIDE AND A MILE DEEP. THE GALLANT GLADIATOR PILOTS DID NOT DEViate AN INCH. GUNS BLAZING, THEY TORE IN ...



THAT SPLENDID HANDFUL OF BRITISH PILOTS WERE MAGNIFICENT! OUTSPEEDED, OUTGUNNED BY THE MODERN GERMAN FIGHTERS, THEY FLEW THEIR BULLET RIDDLED WRECKS INTO THE HEART OF THE ENEMY FORCE ... AND A SCORE OF BLACK-CROSSED FIGHTERS SPUN EARTHWARDS ...



... BUT THE ODDS WERE TOO MUCH EVEN FOR SUCH UNQUENCHABLE COURAGE. ONE BY ONE THEY WERE BLASTED FROM THE SKY BY CHATTERING SPANDAU MACHINE GUNS.

DARKENING THE DAWNING SKY, THE STREAMLINED MESSERSCHMITTS SWEEP OVER THE AIRFIELD -- AND A SQUADRON BROKE OFF, TO HURTLE DOWN WITH GUNS LASHING FLAME AND LEAD ...

HECK, THEY'RE GIVING US A REAL PASTING NOW, SIR!

IT'S NOTHING TO WHAT'S COMING NEXT -- LOOK JU. FIFTY-TWO TROOP CARRIERS -- THEY MUST BE LOADED WITH PARATROOPS!

THE AIR SHUDDERED WITH THE DRONE OF ENGINES AS THE LUMBERING JU.52'S FLEW OVER ... AND A RIVER OF MEN POURED FROM EACH ONE!



THE GERMAN AIRBORNE INVASION OF CRETE HAD BEGUN!

Chapter 2. AIRBORNE INVASION

PARACHUTES BLOSSOMED THICKLY IN THE BLUE SKY... AND DRIFTED DOWN TO PATCH-PATTERN THE DARK EARTH HALF A MILE WEST OF THE AIRFIELD. THE PARACHUTISTS FORMED UP SWIFTLY...

THEY'RE COMING STRAIGHT FOR US!

HOLD YOUR FIRE UNTIL MY ORDER!

THEN DEADLY ACCURATE GERMAN MORTARS BEGAN DROPPING SMOKE BOMBS RIGHT IN FRONT OF 'FORCE FIVE', HIDING THE ADVANCE OF THE BATTLE-HARDENED PARACHUTISTS... UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT...

RAPID...
FIRE!



BULLETS RIPPED INTO THE FAST ADVANCING GERMANS. MANY FELL -- BUT FOR EVERY CASUALTY, FIVE MORE SEEMED TO EMERGE FROM THEIR SWIRLING SMOKE SCREEN ...

AT LEAST WE'RE MAKING 'EM HUG THE GROUND FOR COVER, SIR -- BUT WHY DON'T THE AUSSIES ON OUR RIGHT GIVE US A HAND?

JERRY'S BEEN CLEVER WITH HIS SMOKE SCREEN, CORPORAL -- THE AUSTRALIANS CAN'T SEE THE ATTACK AT ALL!



BY A CRUEL TWIST OF FATE, THE ENEMY PARACHUTISTS WERE THROWING THE WHOLE WEIGHT OF THEIR ASSAULT AGAINST THE WEAKEST PART OF THE BRITISH DEFENCES -- **FORCE FIVE SECTOR!** AND NOW THEIR SUPERBLY ACCURATE MORTAR SMOKE BOMBS WERE REPLACED BY HIGH EXPLOSIVES ...



THEY'RE GOING TO CHARGE AGAIN, ANY MOMENT -- AND WE'VE GOT TO HAVE HELP! CORPORAL, SEND A MAN THROUGH TO THE AUSSIES TO BRING 'EM OVER -- WHILE WE COUNTER ATTACK TO HOLD THE JERRIES UNTIL THEY GET HERE!

CHALKY WHITE'S SHOUTED ORDER TO A NEARBY TRENCH SENT A TIGHT-LIPPED MAN SCUTTling THROUGH THE SMOKE SCREEN TOWARDS THE AUSTRALIANS ... JUST AS THE GERMANS SURGED FORWARD IN AN ALL OUT CHARGE!

UP AND AT 'EM, FORCE FIVE! BAYONETS! CHAAARGE!



IN THAT BRIEF SPLIT SECOND OF TIME ~ THE MESSENGER, STUMBLING THROUGH THE WREATHING WHITE FUMES, HEARD THE CHATTERING OF AN UNSEEN GERMAN CARBINE, AND FELT BURNING, BITING AGONY CUT INTO BOTH HIS LEGS ...

AAAAGH!



MEANWHILE, GUN MUZZLES RAW WITH LIVID FLAME, THE TWO CHARGING FORCES MET -- THEN IT WAS TOO DENSE FOR SHOOTING -- AND A SAVAGE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT BEGAN...

I HOPE THOSE DIGGERS GET HERE FAST, SIR!

THESE BOYS ARE JERRY'S BEST -- WE CAN'T HOLD 'EM MUCH LONGER!

THE GERMANS WERE BATTLE-HARDENED SOLDIERS OF A DOZEN CAMPAIGNS -- AND THEIR FIRST-CLASS TRAINING SOON TOLD AGAINST THE INEXPERIENCED BRITISH TROOPS.

CAN'T STOP 'EM WITHOUT AUSSIES, CORPORAL... GET OUR CHAPS BACK TO TRENCHES... I'LL HOLD THESE APES OFF WITH COVERING FIRE!



THERE WAS NO TIME FOR CHALKY TO PROTEST-- ONLY TO OBEY-- AND HIS SHOUT DREW THE BATTERED MEN OF "FORCE FIVE" BACK-- SHIELDED BY CLIVE CARTER'S SCYTHING SHEET OF FLAME AND LEAD!



STEP BY STEP HE RETREATED, GUARDING THE "FORCE FIVE" SURVIVORS AND THEY HAD ALMOST REACHED THEIR TRENCHES-- WHEN A SEARCHING GERMAN SHOT FOUND ITS MARK!



SHOTS SNARLED VICIOUSLY ALL AROUND CHALKY WHITE AS HE LEAPED TO THE SENSELESS OFFICER'S SIDE -- AND STUMBLED BACK THROUGH THE WHINING STORM OF STEEL WITH HIM.



FOR A MOMENT THE GERMAN ONSLAUGHT WAS HALTED ... AND FIFTY YARDS AWAY, BEYOND THE DENSE SMOKE BARRIER, A GROANING, TEETH-GRITTED FIGURE DRAGGED HIMSELF NEARER AN AUSTRALIAN POST ...

JERRY'S THROWING EVERYTHING ... THEY'VE GOT ... AT US ... YOU'VE GOT ... TO HELP...

JUMPING JACKASSES -- THE ATTACK ON US IS ONLY A FEINT. HELP THE POOR SPORT, I'M GOING FOR THE MAJOR!



THE LEATHERY-FACED SPEAKER HALF CLAMBERED FROM THE SLIT-TRENCH -- THEN HIS EYES WIDENED AND HIS VOICE GRATED HARSHLY ...



THE THREE LEADING GLIDERS TOUCHED DOWN WITH A GRINDING SCREECH OF RIPPING METAL AND SPLINTERING WOOD, THEN SLID TO A STOP -- AND ERUPTED GREY-CLAD MEN...



...THEIR GUNS ROARING A SHATTERING ANTHEM OF DESTRUCTION!

FROM ALL SIDES THE DEFENDERS' FIRE WHIPLASHED INTO THE AIRBORNE TROOPS -- BUT MORE AND MORE GLIDERS WERE SLITHERING IN AND THE GERMANS WERE FLOODING FROM THEM IRRESISTIBLY.

THE ENEMY PLAN IS OBVIOUS -- TO LINK UP WITH THE ATTACKING FORCE OUTSIDE -- AND THOSE POOR DEVILS OF FORCE FIVE ARE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE! THEY WON'T STAND A CHANCE!



BY THEN CHALKY WHITE HAD ONLY EIGHT MEN LEFT AND ALMOST NO AMMUNITION. HE SAW THE NEW ATTACK COMING FROM BEHIND... AND HEARD THE ONLY ANSWER, WHISPERED BY HAGGARD-FACED CARTER...

GET CRACKING
FORCE FIVE--HEAD
FOR THE SMOKE!

TEN MEN... NEVER
HOLD HUNDRED-YARD
SECTOR... USELESS
WASTE OF LIVES. GET
OUT OF IT, CORPORAL!

RIGHT,
SIR!



SOMEHOW THEY ALL MADE IT THROUGH THE FURY OF THE GERMAN FIRE... INTO THE BLANKETING WHITENESS OF THE SMOKE SCREEN... AND BEYOND, PAST THE GUNS OF THE AUSTRALIANS...

KEEP MOVING! GET THE
HECK OUT OF OUR POSITION
OR YOU'LL BE IN OUR OWN
CROSSFIRE!



ALONG THE BATTLE-LOCKED LINE THEY STUMBLED, STAGGERING LIKE MEN DRIVEN BY WILL ALONE. AT LAST, AN OFFICER, UNRUFFLED BY THE TUMULT ABOUT HIM, GAVE THEM DIRECTIONS ...

KEEP GOING, LADS, TILL YOU HIT THE NEXT ROCK CLUMP, THEN BEAR LEFT. A TRACK LEADS INTO THE HILLS -- IT'S THE ONLY WAY THE GERMANS HAVE LEFT OPEN!



WEAK FROM LOSS OF BLOOD, CLIVE CARTER WAS ONLY HAZILY AWARE OF REACHING THE EDGE OF THE HILLS. -- BUT HE DID REALISE THAT HIS MEN HAD FOUGHT BEYOND THE LIMIT OF THEIR ENDURANCE ...

WHAT NOW, SIR?

MAKE FOR THE BEACHES DUE SOUTH, CORPORAL! THOSE MEN WOULDN'T LAST A MOMENT IN BATTLE -- AND ANYWAY, THE REST OF THE AIRFIELD FORCE WON'T BE FAR BEHIND!



Phantom Force Five

CLIVE CARTER WAS RIGHT -- FOR SIX DOGGED HOURS THE BRITISH DEFENDERS FOUGHT ON -- TAKING A HEAVY TOLL OF THE GERMANS. FOR EVERY YARD LOST. BUT FINALLY SUPERIOR WEAPONS AND NUMBERS WERE TOO MUCH AND THE GENERAL RETREAT BEGAN.

THAT'S THE LAST OF OUR CHAPS, SIR. NOW MY BOYS WILL KEEP THE KRAUTS BACK WHILE YOU TAKE THE WITHDRAWAL ROUTE!

GOOD WORK, DICK -- YOU FOLLOW US IN FIVE MINUTES -- AND THAT'S AN ORDER!



BY THAT TIME, THE REMNANTS OF FORCE FIVE HAD REACHED THE BEACH ON WHICH THEY HAD LANDED JUST THREE DAYS BEFORE ...

GOOD GRIEF! YOU CHAPS LOOK AS IF YOU HAD A REAL PASTING!

WE CAUGHT IT ON KASOVANI AIRFIELD -- THE JERRIES REALLY TURNED ON THE HEAT! ANYWAY, WE'RE UNDER YOUR COMMAND NOW, SIR!



THE BEACH MARSHAL'S GAZE SEARCHED THE LINE OF EXHAUSTED FACES, SEEING THE RED-RIMMED, STARING EYES... THE TIGHT DRAWN LIPS THAT TOLD OF RAW RAGGED NERVES... AND HE KNEW THAT THESE MEN WERE NEAR TO BREAKING POINT!



THE LANDING CRAFT IS ABOUT TO LEAVE -- GET YOUR MEN ABOARD AT ONCE! WE'RE EXPECTING ENEMY AIR ATTACKS TO START ANY MINUTE.

VERY GOOD, SIR!

ALMOST AS SOON AS CLIVE CARTER'S MEN WERE ABOARD, THE GREAT RAMP LIFTED -- AND THE LANDING CRAFT HEADED OUT TO SEA...



NICE HOT CUPPERTEA, PONGO?

THANKS, MATELOT -- WHERE'S THE DRIVER TAKING US, BACK TO ALEXANDRIA?

NOT LIKELY, CHUM -- THE SEA'S STIFF WITH JERRY SUBS ALL THE WAY -- NO, WE'RE STEERING FOR MALTA!

BACK ON CRETE, THE HARD-PRESSED DEFENDERS WERE FIGHTING A WITHDRAWAL BATTLE FROM THE AIRFIELD -- A SAVAGE, MERCILESS DUEL WHICH LASTED UNTIL THEY REACHED THE BEACHES, THREE DAYS LATER...



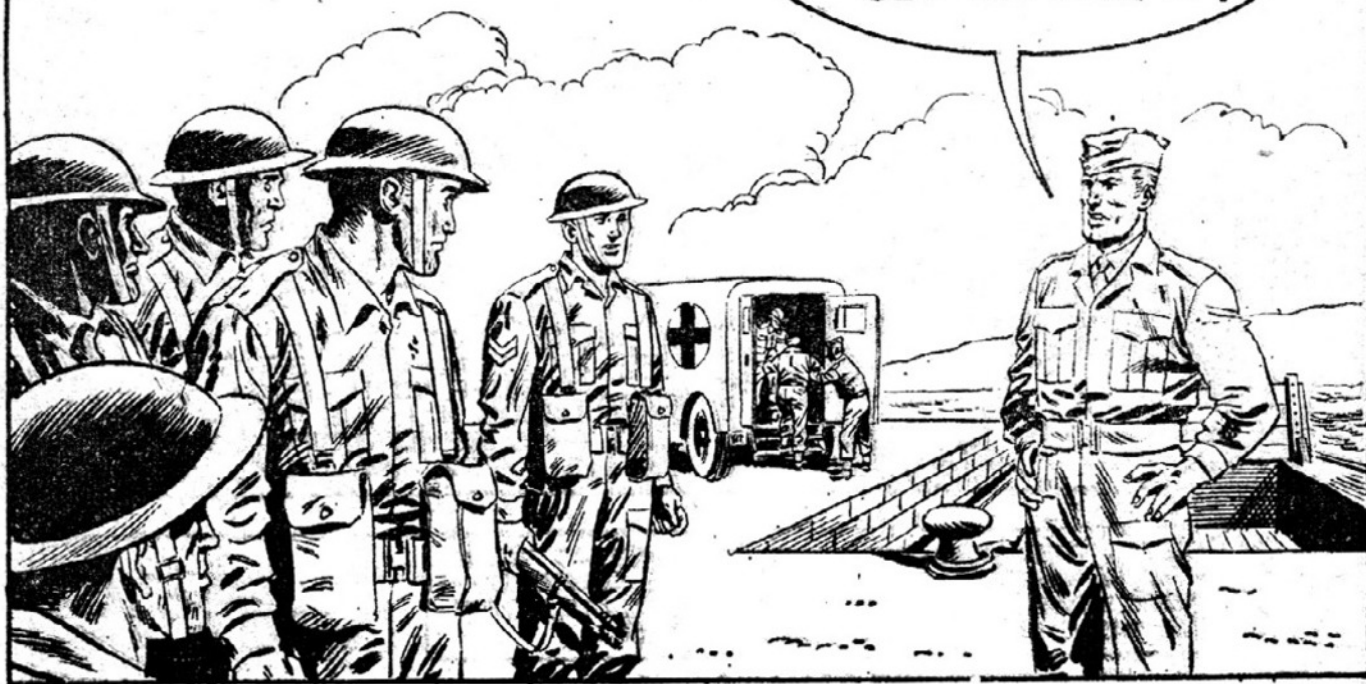
YOU AUSSIES ARE FROM KASOVANI AIRFIELD, AREN'T YOU? HAD YOUR FIRST LOT THROUGH SEVENTY-TWO HOURS AGO!

THAT CRUMMY BUNCH OF POWDER PUFF FIGHTERS -- IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THOSE DOZEY JOKERS CAVING IN, WE AUSSIES WOULD HAVE HELD THAT BLOOMING AIRFIELD!

*Chapter 3.***NIGHT OPERATION**

THE LANDING CRAFT FROM CRETE REACHED THE ISLAND FORTRESS OF MALTA SAFELY... AND THE SHATTERED FORCE FIVE DISEMBARKED. WITH ARMY EFFICIENCY, THEY WERE SOON BEING ORGANISED...

NOW, YOU 'ORRIBLE LOT! YOUR OFFICER'S GOING TO HOSPITAL ~~ SO YOU COME UNDER MY SHELTERING WING, SEE? FIRST BATHS, THEN DECENT UNIFORMS AND SOME GRUB. THEN WE START WORK! CORPORAL ~~ GET 'EM FELL IN!



AFTER BATHING, HOT FOOD... AND A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP IN A NEARBY BARRACKS, THE MEN WHO STOOD ON PARADE THE FOLLOWING DAY WERE ALMOST UNRECOGNISABLE AS THE MEN OF FORCE FIVE ~~ EXCEPT FOR...

...THEY'VE GOT NO SPIRIT, SIR! NO BACKBONE AT ALL. MORALE'S ROCK BOTTOM!

HMMM! THE ONLY THING TO DO IS TO PUT THEM ON DETACHED GUARD DUTIES. THEY'RE NO GOOD FOR ANYTHING ELSE!



SO THE LISTLESS HANDFUL OF MEN WHO HAD COME OUT OF THE HOLOCAUST OF CRETE WERE PUT ON GUARD DUTIES ON A LONELY STRETCH OF MALTA'S COAST ROAD! AND THEIR MORALE WENT EVEN LOWER!

STAND UP, YOU APOLOGIES FOR SOLDIERS! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON SENTRY DUTY!



ONE OF THE GLOOMY-FACED MEN SHRUGGED MOODILY ...

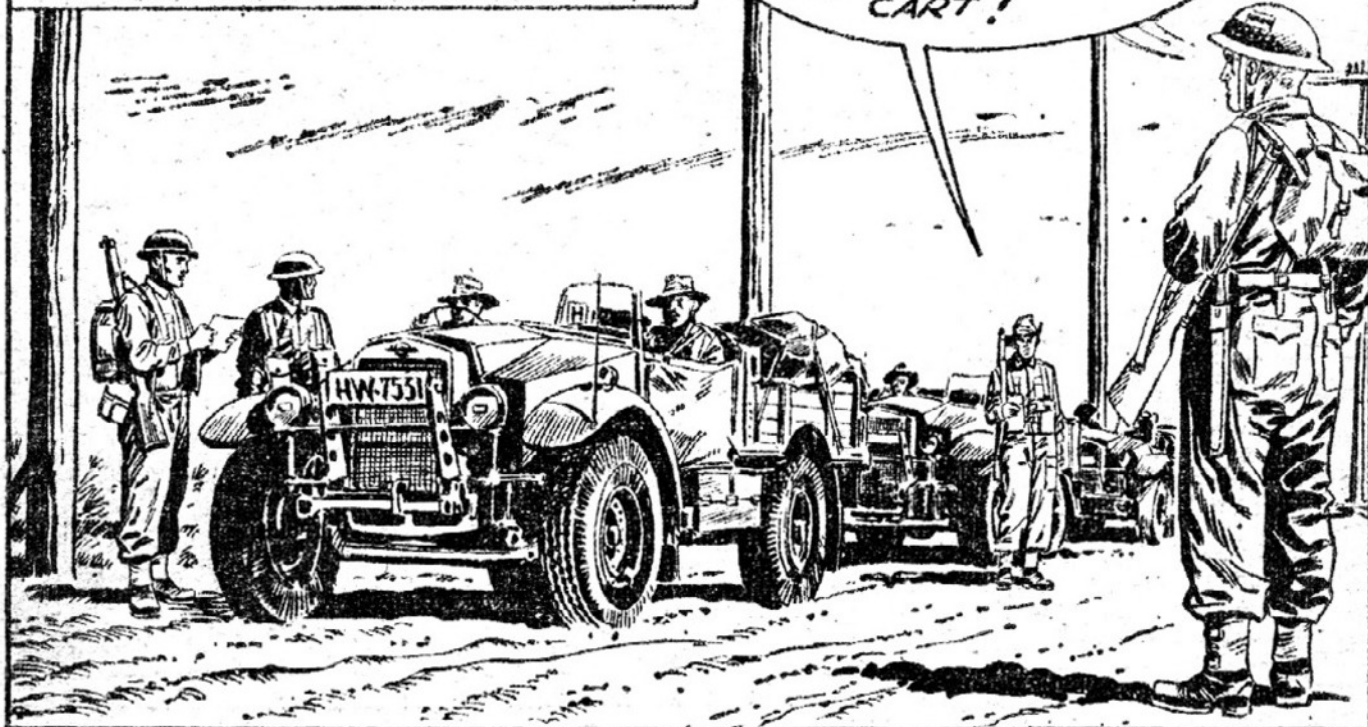
AW, CUT IT OUT, CHALKY. WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER? FOUR TRUCKS A DAY COME DOWN HERE AND NOTHING ELSE! YOU KNOW WE'RE A DEAD LOSS OUTFIT, PUT UP HERE OUT OF HARM'S WAY!

SOLDIER, WHEN I SAY STAND UP, YOU FLIPPING WELL STAND UP OR I'LL PIN YOUR EARS BACK!



TEMPERS WERE FLARING DANGEROUSLY... WHEN THE ROAR OF LORRY ENGINES SOUNDED ALONG THE ROAD AND THREE ARMY TRUCKS PULLED UP TO THE BARRIER. THE FIRST DRIVER OFFERED HIS PASS -- AND SUDDENLY A VOICE EXPLODED DISBELIEVINGLY...

WELL, WELL -- IF IT ISN'T THE PUSHOVER POMMIES FROM KASOVANI AIRFIELD! THE CROWS WHO BROKE WHEN THEY GOT TOUGH -- AND LEFT US AUSSIES IN THE CART!



THE ONLY EFFECT THE AUSTRALIAN'S SNEER OF CONTEMPT HAD WAS TO DEEPEN THE LISTLESSNESS OF THE TWO SENTRIES! BUT CHALKY WHITE NEARLY BURST WITH FURY -- UNTIL A NEW VOICE WHIPLASHED OUT!

YOU COULDN'T FIGHT YOUR WAY OUT OF A PAPER BAG!

GET BACK INTO THAT TRUCK, SOLDIER -- OR YOU'LL BE UNDER ARREST SO FAST, YOUR LEGS WON'T TOUCH THE GROUND! SENTRY, LIFT THAT BARRIER AND GET THE TRUCKS MOVING!



MISTER CARTER!

STARTLED, THE AUSTRALIAN CLIMBED ABOARD AGAIN AND THE TRUCKS MOVED OFF ...

GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, CORPORAL -- BUT WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME IS WRONG WITH THE MEN? THEY TOOK THOSE INSULTS LIKE SPONGES!

AFTER THAT DO ON THE AIRFIELD, SIR. THEY THINK THEY'RE WASHOUTS.



YOU SEE, SIR, THEY RECKON THEY CAN'T FIGHT! IN THAT SCRAP WITH THE GERMANS THEY WERE LICKED HANDS DOWN -- THEY TOOK A BEATING -- AND THEY'RE STILL ON THE FLOOR!

WELL, THEY WON'T GET UP UNTIL THEY FIND THEIR SELF-RESPECT AGAIN -- UNTIL THEY KNOW THEY CAN FIGHT! THAT MEANS TRAINING 'EM. WELL, I'VE GOT A MONTH'S CONVALESCENT LEAVE -- SO I'D BETTER GET STARTED ON 'EM!



THE DISPIRITED SURVIVORS OF FORCE FIVE DID NOT KNOW WHAT HIT THEM AFTER THAT! CLIVE CARTER TOOK OVER -- AND THEIR TRAINING FOR BATTLE STARTED!

FASTER!
IT'S GOT TO BE LIKE A LIGHTNING STROKE -- OR YOU MISS AND GET ONE OF THESE!

IT'S NO USE -- WE JUST AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH!



Phantom Force Five

BUT SOON THE KEEN YOUNG OFFICER'S ENTHUSIASM
BEGAN TO STRIKE ANSWERING SPARKS ...



AS THE DAYS PASSED, THERE
WAS NO STOPPING THE MEN
OF FORCE FIVE. THEY WERE
GAINING CONFIDENCE WITH
EVERY DIFFICULT TASK THEY
MASTERED ... LIKE CLIFF
CLIMBING ...



...CANOEING IN SLIM KAYAK-LIFE CRAFT, BORROWED FROM A NEARBY ROYAL MARINE BASE ...

NEXT TIME KEEP THE BOWS HEAD ON INTO THE WAVES -- IF THE WAVES HIT ABEAM, YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE!

A FEW DUCKINGS LIKE THAT, SIR, AND THEY'LL LEARN!



... MOVING AT NIGHT AND UNARMED COMBAT ...

GOOD WORK, PETERS! I HARDLY HEARD A THING AND YOU'VE GOT RICHARDS HELPLESS!



Phantom Force Five

FOR FOUR WEEKS CLIVE CARTER DROVE THEM-- TRAINING THEM TO PEAK PHYSICAL FITNESS AND IN EVERY ART OF FIGHTING HE KNEW. AT THE MONTH'S END...

WELL, SIR, THANKS TO YOU THEY COULD WHIP THEIR WEIGHT IN WILD CATS! THERE ISN'T ANOTHER OUTFIT IN THE MED TO TOUCH 'EM NOW FOR TOUGHNESS AND BATTLE SKILL!

THEY'RE TOO DARNED GOOD TO BE WASTED, STUCK OUT HERE! I'M GOING INTO H.Q. TO GET 'EM POSTED FOR COMBAT DUTY!



BUT AT ARMY HEADQUARTERS IN VALETTA, CLIVE CARTER'S CONFIDENT HOPES WERE SHATTERED BY A COLD-EYED STAFF OFFICER

THOSE MEN ARE USELESS FOR ANYTHING BUT GUARD DUTIES. PUT THEM IN ACTION AGAIN-- AND THEY'D CRACK WIDE OPEN-- SO THEY'RE STAYING WHERE THEY ARE!

PRIVATE

BUT, SIR...

THAT'S ENOUGH, LIEUTENANT-- OR YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF IN TROUBLE!

STAFF
CAPTAIN POSTING



LIPS TIGHT WITH DISAPPOINTMENT, CLIVE SALUTED BEFORE TURNING AWAY... AND HE HEARD THE ADJOINING DOOR OPEN BEHIND HIM.

COME INTO MY OFFICE, GORDON-- I WANT TO DISCUSS SECURITY DETAILS FOR ESCORTING GENERAL HOLMES FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE MARA CONFERENCE!

VERY GOOD, SIR!



OUTSIDE THE DOOR, CLIVE PAUSED AS HIS MEMORY CLICKED ODD FACTS INTO PLACE...

STAFF
MEETINGS

0000

THAT MUST BE GENERAL SIR PATRICK HOLMES, THE TOP PLANNING CHIEF OF THE WAR OFFICE IN LONDON! WONDER WHAT HE'S DOING OUT HERE? WELL IT DOESN'T ANSWER OUR PROBLEM!



Phantom Force Five

BACK AT THE FORCE FIVE POST, CLIVE TOLD CHALKY, WHITE OF HIS FAILURE... AND FOUND THE USUALLY CHEERFUL CORPORAL IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPONDENCY...

I KNOW IT'S BAD NEWS, BUT IT'S NOT THE END, CORPORAL!

WHILE YOU WERE GONE WE HAD A MESSAGE, SIR, RELIEVING US OF DUTY HERE TONIGHT. SEEMS THERE'S SOME V.I.P. VISITING MALTA... AND THEY CAN'T DEPEND ON US, EVEN AS GUARDS! I ALMOST WISH SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN TO HIM!



BLAZING ANGER BOILED IN THE YOUNG OFFICER'S HEART -- THIS WAS THE FINAL INSULT TO FORCE FIVE! THEN SUDDENLY IT WAS GONE -- IN ITS PLACE FLASHED INSPIRATION THAT ALMOST TOOK HIS BREATH AWAY!

CORPORAL, MAYBE YOUR PRAYERS WILL BE ANSWERED. GET THE MEN AND KIT READY TO MOVE OUT -- WE'RE GOING ON A NIGHT OPERATION!



THE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS FOR GENERAL HOLMES' VISIT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT TO THE LAST DETAIL. THAT NIGHT, WHEN AN R.A.F. DAKOTA LANDED, IT WAS IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDED...

EVENING, COLONEL -- YOU SEEM TO BE EXPECTING TROUBLE!

WE HOPE NOT -- BUT WE'RE READY FOR ANYTHING, SIR! WELCOME TO MALTA!

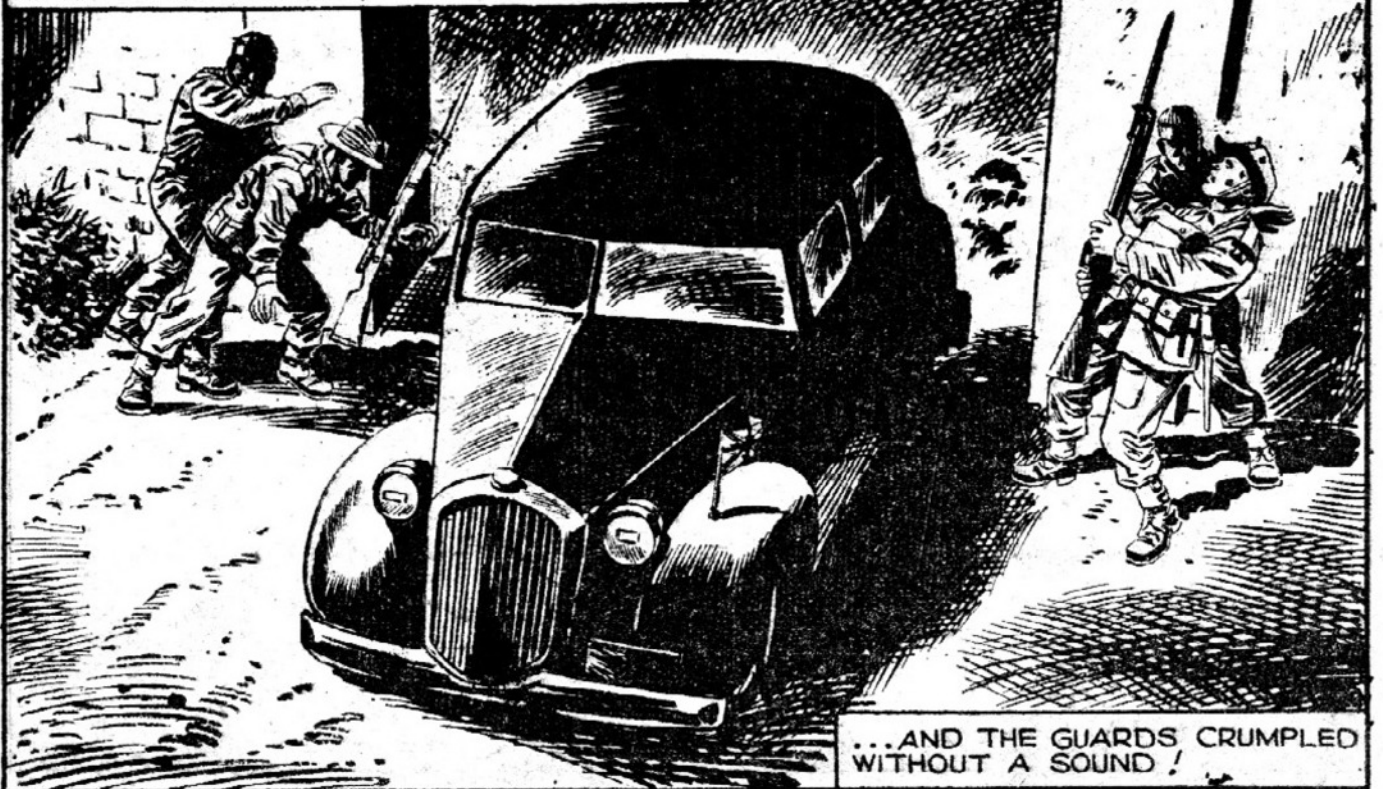


A WAITING STAFF CAR WHISKED THE GENERAL AWAY AND PURRED TOWARDS THE AIRFIELD GATES, WHERE TWO BRAWNY AUSTRALIAN SENTRIES WAITED...

AND WHEN THE GENERAL GOES THROUGH, YOU BONEHEADS, SNAP TO THE *PRESENT* SMARTLY -- OR I'LL HAVE YOU!



AS THE CAR SLID SMOOTHLY THROUGH THE OPEN GATES...TWO SILENT SHAPES DRIFTED FROM THE SHADOWS BEHIND THE SENTRIES... AND **STRUCK SWIFTLY AND STUNNINGLY!**



...AND THE GUARDS CRUMPLED WITHOUT A SOUND!

LIGHTNING FAST, THE ATTACKERS SPRANG ~ THE REAR DOORS OF THE CAR WERE WRENCHED OPEN ~ AND THEY LEAPED INSIDE

ENEMY RAIDERS, EH?

JUST DON'T MOVE, GENERAL !

KEEP DRIVING !

FIFTY YARDS FROM THE AIRFIELD AN UNSUSPECTING ARMoured CAR AND MOTOR CYCLE ESCORT MOVED AWAY IN FRONT OF THE STAFF CAR ~ BUT NOT FOR LONG ...

TURN RIGHT HERE ~ AND START SPEEDING !

THE CAR SWEEPED ROUND... AND STREAKED DOWN THE SIDE ROAD. TWO...THREE MILES FARTHER ON IT STOPPED -- AND THE LUCKLESS DRIVER WAS FORCED OUT ...



WEARING BRITISH UNIFORMS, TOO! YOU COULD BE SHOT AS SPIES FOR THAT!

THEN THE VEHICLE WAS HURTLING AWAY AGAIN -- TWISTING AND SCREAMING AROUND TIGHT BENDS... BUT ALWAYS HEADING SOUTH -- **FOR THE COAST!** FINALLY IT HALTED AGAIN -- AND GENERAL HOLMES HEARD HIS CAPTOR'S FAULTLESS ENGLISH ONCE MORE



NUMBER FOUR, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THE CAR! NUMBER TWO, BLINDFOLD THE GENERAL FOR THE CLIMB DOWN THE CLIFF!

Phantom Force Five

THE GENERAL'S PROTESTS DIED ON HIS LIPS... THERE WAS AN INFLEXIBLE STEEL TONE IN THAT COMMAND WHICH MADE ANY ARGUMENT USELESS. FIRMLY HE WAS LIFTED OVER THE EDGE...

HANG ON ~-~
AND DO
NOTHING
ELSE !



DOWN, DOWN WENT THE GENERAL, ON WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A NIGHTMARE JOURNEY IF HE HAD NOT FELT THAT THERE WERE STRONG HANDS ALL AROUND HIM, READY FOR HIS SLIGHTEST SLIP. AT LAST....

WAIT FOR THE
OTHER TWO, THEN
FOLLOW US !



FOR THE NEXT SIX HOURS, THE BLINDFOLDED GENERAL COULD ONLY SIT AND HANG ON TO THE SIDES OF THE FRAIL CANOE AS IT WAS BUFFETED AND BEATEN BY THE CHOPPING WAVES ...



IN WELL-DRILLED FORMATION, THE SLIM CRAFT CAME INTO A SANDY SHORE -- AND GROUNDED, GRATING SOFTLY ...



THERE WAS A NARROW, STEEPLY GRADED PATH LEADING UP THE ROCK FACE. SUREFOOTED AND SOUNDLESSLY, THE LEADER GUIDED THE STRANGELY TIED GROUP UPWARDS ...

ALMOST AT THE END OF YOUR JOURNEY NOW, GENERAL!



FOR ALMOST A MILE THEY SLIPPED THROUGH THE DARKNESS -- UNTIL THE LEADER'S LIFTED HAND HALTED THEM AND THREE OF THE RAIDERS DRIFTED AWAY ...

THE DECOY LADS HAVE GOT TO MAKE JUST ENOUGH NOISE TO DRAW THOSE GUARDS -- YET NOT START 'EM SHOOTING!



THE TWO GUARDS REACHED THE END OF THEIR HUNDRED YARD BEAT ~
THEN SOFT SCRAPING SOUNDS CAUGHT THEIR ALERT EARS

HEAR IT?
'SOMETHING'S
MOVING BY THAT
TREE!

YEP, I HEARD
IT ~ BUT IT WAS
BY THOSE
BUSHES!



UNCERTAINLY THEY HESITATED ~
AND THEN THE RAIDERS ACTED ~
FOUR MEN LEAPED FORWARD ~
AND FLUNG THEMSELVES
ON THE WIRE



...CRUSHING IT AND MAKING
A HUMAN BRIDGE OVER THE
VICIOUS TEARING BARBS!

WITHIN TEN SECONDS, THE NOISES DECOYING THE GUARDS HAD GONE -- SO HAD THE HUMAN BRIDGE -- AND THE GENERAL WAS STEPPING THROUGH THE LARGE FRENCH WINDOWS OF THE HOUSE ...



GENERAL HOLMES FELT THE BLINDFOLD LOOSEN... THEN IT FELL... AND THE ROOM WAS BRILLIANT WITH DAZZLING LIGHT!

GREAT SCOTT, WHERE THE DICKENS AM I? AND WHO THE BLAZES ARE YOU?



THE GENERAL'S PIERCING EYES BORED INTO CLIVE'S -- AND THE YOUNG OFFICER PALED AT THE BLAZING WRATH BUILDING IN THE OTHER MAN'S FACE ...

BY THUNDER, YOU KIDNAPPED ME, THREATENED ME WITH A WEAPON -- ALL FOR SOME STUPID JOKE. THAT SORT OF HUMOUR DESERVES ONLY ONE REWARD -- A COURT MARTIAL!

WITH RESPECTS, SIR! OUR GUNS ARE EMPTY -- HERE'S MINE TO PROVE IT -- AND IT WAS ANYTHING BUT A PRANK! WILL YOU LET ME EXPLAIN, SIR?



SOMETHING IN CLIVE'S GRIMLY DETERMINED LOOK MADE THE GENERAL NOD -- AND HE BEGAN TO HEAR THE FULL STORY OF FORCE FIVE -- FROM LANDING IN CRETE TO ITS SURVIVORS' SHAME IN MALTA. SLOWLY HIS FACE SOFTENED ...

... THAT'S IT, SIR. YOU SEE, WE HAD TO PROVE WE WERE NOT A WRITE-OFF! WE CAN STILL HELP ENGLAND AGAINST HER ENEMIES!



ONLY TEN MEN -- AND YOU GOT ME HERE WHILE THE ISLAND MUST BE IN AN UPROAR! YOU'VE PROVED IT ALL RIGHT, MISTER CARTER!

FOR LONG, TENSION FILLED MOMENTS, GENERAL HOLMES PACED THE ROOM, OBVIOUSLY DEEP IN THOUGHT. THEN HE PAUSED IN FRONT OF CLIVE AND CHALKY...

IT WAS A DARING PLAN -- MAGNIFICENTLY CARRIED OUT! AND FOR THAT REASON ALONE I AM PREPARED NOT TO TAKE ANY ACTION; BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE TOO! I THINK YOU CAN HELP ME IN A TOP SECRET OPERATION



THE GENERAL TURNED TO THE LARGE WALL MAP BEHIND HIM...

THE REASON I AM HERE IS TO TRY TO ANTICIPATE THE GERMAN ASSAULT ON THE SUEZ CANAL. THE ATTACK WILL PROBABLY COME FROM CRETE -- AND WILL BE PLANNED BY FIELD MARSHAL VON FLAGENHOST, HITLER'S CLEVEREST TACTICAL SCHEMER!



AT THE MOMENT THE GERMANS HAVE ONLY A STRONG GARRISON IN CRETE -- NOT AN INVASION FORCE! VON FLAGENHOST IS IN SOUTHERN ITALY -- AND IF YOU CAN GRAB HIM, AS YOU SNATCHED ME, THE ENEMY WOULD LOSE THE BEST PLANNING BRAIN IT HAS!



AND THE SUEZ ATTACK SCHEME WOULD BE IN TROUBLE! SIR, WHEN DO WE START?

Chapter 4.

LIGHTNING RAID

EVENTS MOVED SWIFTLY AFTER THAT. FOR FORTY-EIGHT HOURS THE 'FORCE FIVE' MEN WORKED FLAT OUT, PREPARING FOR THEIR TASK. FINALLY THEY WERE READY AND AT DUSK THEY BOARDED A SUBMARINE IN VALETTA HARBOUR ...



FOR A NIGHT AND DAY THE SUBMERGED *SEA WOLF* SLID THROUGH THE SEA'S GREEN DEPTHS ~ WHILE THE MEN OF 'FORCE FIVE' WERE BRIEFED WITH THEIR PLANS ONCE AGAIN.

INTELLIGENCE REPORTS THAT THE FIELD MARSHAL WILL BE TRAVELLING ON THE BELFONTO ROAD TONIGHT. WE'LL HIT HIM AND HIS ESCORT GROUP AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT WHERE I'VE SHOWN YOU ON THE MAP.



BLACKNESS CLOAKED THE SEA AS THE SUBMARINE SURFACED A MILE FROM THE SOUTHERN COAST OF ITALY. RUBBER DINGHIES WERE UNLOADED ...

BEST OF LUCK,
FELLER!

JUST DON'T FORGET
TO COME BACK FOR
US, SAILOR ~ WE'LL
DO THE REST!

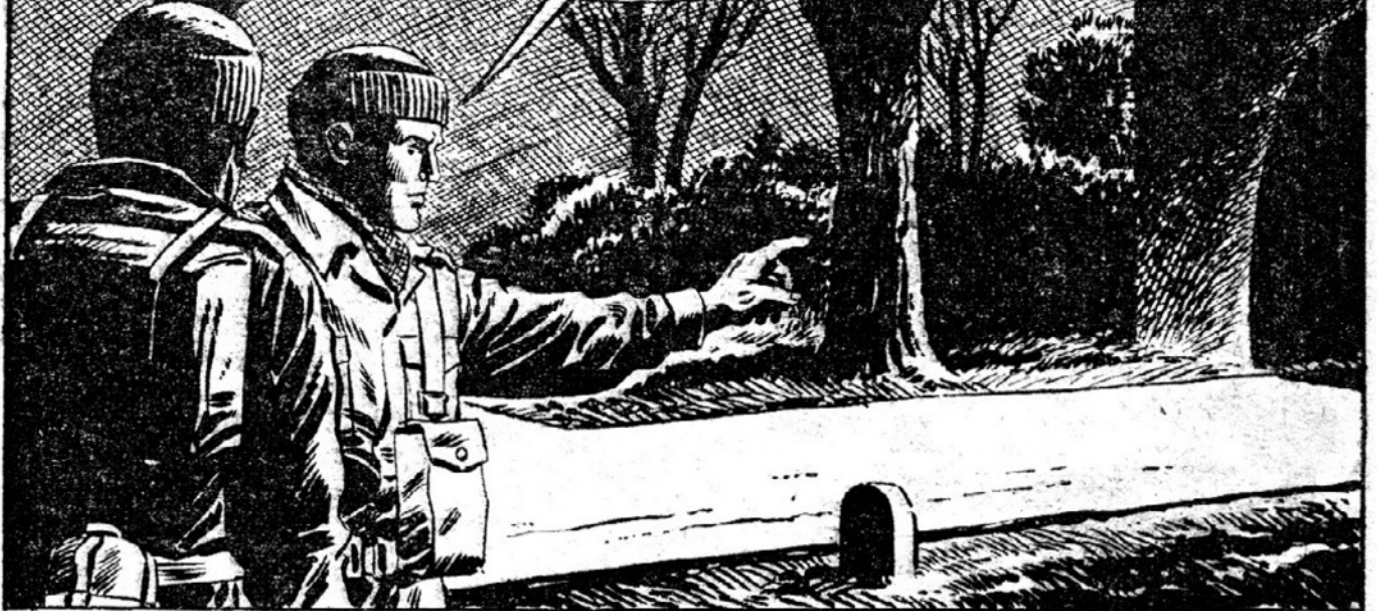
THE RAIDERS PADDED IN TO THE JAGGED COASTLINE AND BETWEEN TWO FINGERS OF ROCK THAT JUTTED INTO THE SEA; CLIVE FOUND A SANDY BEACHING POINT ...

GET 'EM HIGH
AND DRY OR THE
TIDE'LL FLOAT THEM
OUT TO SEA!

LOOKS LIKE
A GOOD WAY
OUT THROUGH
THE GAP, SIR.

ONCE OFF THE BEACH THEY STRUCK INLAND FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS BEFORE CLIVE SIGNALLED A HALT -- THEIR OBJECTIVE LAY BEFORE THEM ...

THIS IS IT, CORPORAL -- GET THE CHARGES SET UNDER THAT BRIDGE WHILE WE STRING THE WIRE!



LIKE A PERFECTLY DRILLED TEAM THE RAIDERS GOT TO WORK SMOOTHLY AND SOUNDLESSLY. WHEN THEY HAD FINISHED THE WAITING BEGAN -- AN HOUR ... TWO ... AND THEN ...

HERE THEY COME, SIR -- AND MOTOR CYCLES LEADING 'EM AS WE RECKONED!

STAND BY YOUR ELECTRICAL FUSE, CONTACTS!



Phantom Force Five

ENGINES ROARING, THE GERMAN MOTOR CYCLES, SWEEPED UNDER THE BRIDGE, FOLLOWED BY TWO SMALL ARMoured VEHICLES AND A MERCEDES STAFF CAR! THEN THE BLACKNESS WAS RIPPED APART BY EYE SEARING FLAME!



WITH DEVASTATING FURY THE "FORCE FIVE" RAIDERS STRUCK!

HALTEN, SQUAREHEAD, AND MAKE IT QUICK!

I'LL GET THE BRASSHAT BEFORE HE STARTS SHOOTING!



VON FLAGENHOST'S HAND FROZE OVER THE LUGER IN HIS BELT AS THE HUNGRY BLACK MUZZLE OF CLIVE'S AUTOMATIC PISTOL GAPPED UNDER HIS NOSE ...

DER TEUFEL -- ENGLANDERS!

AT YOUR SERVICE, FIELD MARSHAL -- AND DON'T MOVE AN EYEBROW, OR YOU'LL NEVER MOVE AGAIN!



THE FIGHT OUTSIDE WAS FAST AND SAVAGE BEFORE THE GERMAN RESISTANCE WAS BROKEN ...

SHORT AND SWEET, SIR -- WHAT'LL WE DO WITH THE JERRY CARS?



CLIMB ABOARD AND FOLLOW US -- MAYBE WE'LL NEED TO SHOOT OUR WAY BACK TO THE BEACH!

THE MERCEDES AND ITS ESCORT MOVED OFF AGAIN -- BUT THIS TIME DOWN THE RIGHT HAND FORK! AS THEY STREAKED ALONG, CLIVE BEGAN EXAMINING THE BRIEF CASE ...

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO READ THE LIFE STORY OF A TOP RANK NAZI!

ENGLANDER PIG! THOSE ARE MY PERSONAL AND PRIVATE PAPERS!



CAREFULLY CLIVE LEAFED THROUGH THE PAPERS -- AND SUDDENLY STOPPED, ALARM IN HIS STUNNED FEATURES!

GREAT GLORY -- I CAN'T READ GERMAN -- BUT THIS IS OBVIOUS! THE JERRIES ARE LAUNCHING AN AIRBORNE ASSAULT ON THE CANAL FROM SOUTHERN ITALY, REFUELLING IN CRETE! AND IT'S DUE TO START AT THREE A.M. THIS MORNING!



AT ONCE CLIVE HALTED THE VEHICLES ... AND GRAVELY HE TOLD "FORCE FIVE" OF THE GERMAN PLANS ...

...SO THAT'S IT! BY THE TIME WE REACH THE SUB'S RADIO, IT WILL BE DAWN -- AND TOO LATE! ONLY ONE THING CAN STOP THE JERRIES -- AND THAT'S US! WE COULD HAVE A CRACK AT BEATING UP THE AIRFIELD! VOLUNTEERS ONLY -- WHO'S WITH ME?



AN UNANIMOUS EAGER CHORUS WAS HIS ANSWER -- AND ALL THAT CLIVE NEEDED! HE GRINNED ...

RIGHT! THE V.I.P. PENNANT ON THE STAFF CAR WILL BLUFF OUR WAY THROUGH THE GUARDS -- BUT WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT TO GET OUT! LET'S GO!



SOON AFTERWARDS A SWEEPING SEARCHLIGHT MOUNTED ABOVE THE GATES OF BELFONTO AIRFIELD STABBED ALONG THE APPROACH ROAD--AND FOUND THREE VEHICLES RACING TOWARDS THE GATES ...

IT IS THE FIELD MARSHAL! SWITCH OFF, DUMPKOPF--YOU'LL DAZZLE THE DRIVER! GATE GUARD, OPEN UP AT ONCE!

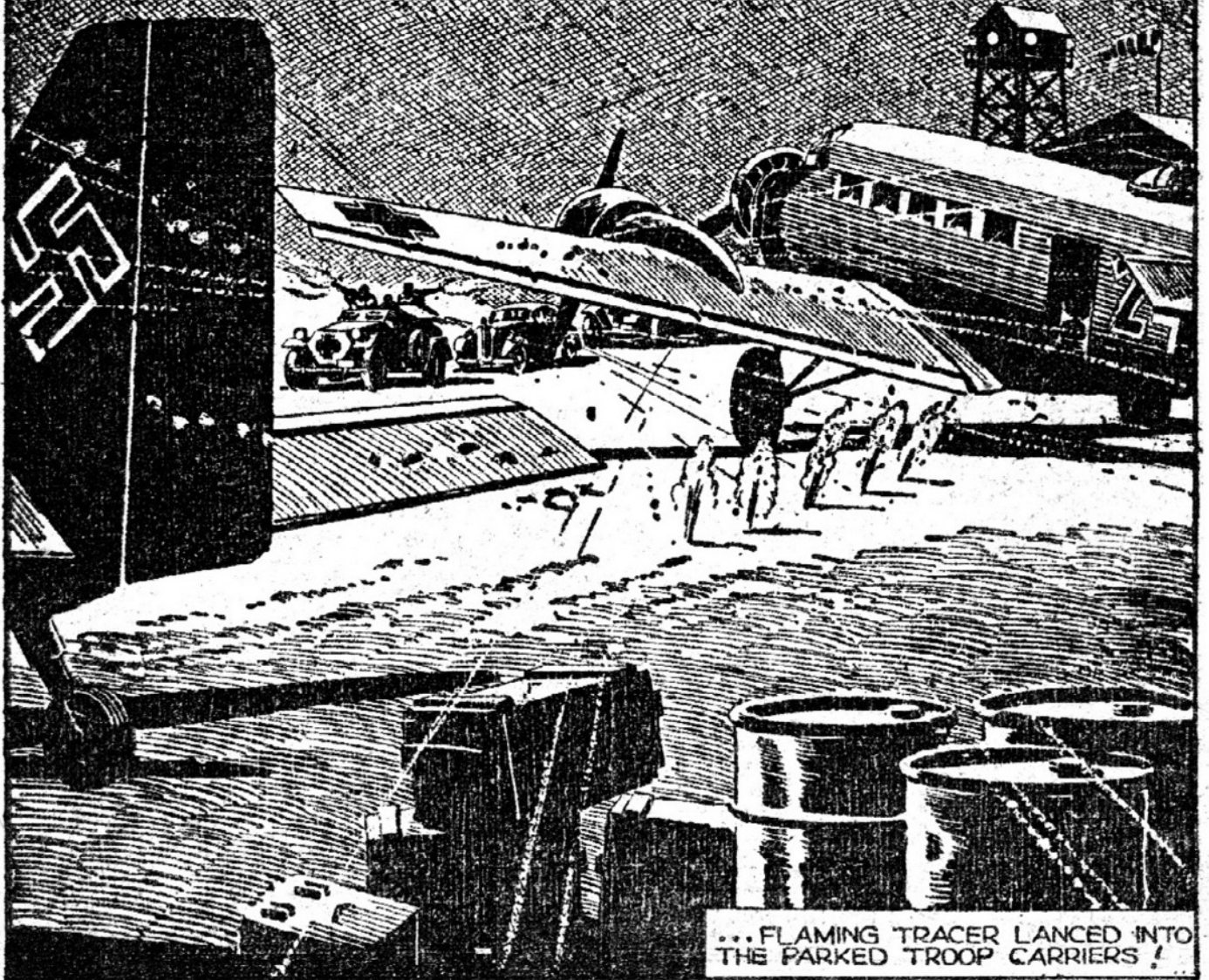


WITHOUT SLOWING, THE CARS STREAKED THROUGH THE OPEN GATES--AND CLIVE SAW HIS MAIN TARGET!

STRAIGHT DOWN THE RUNWAY--WE'LL RIP THOSE PLANES TO SHREDS FIRST!



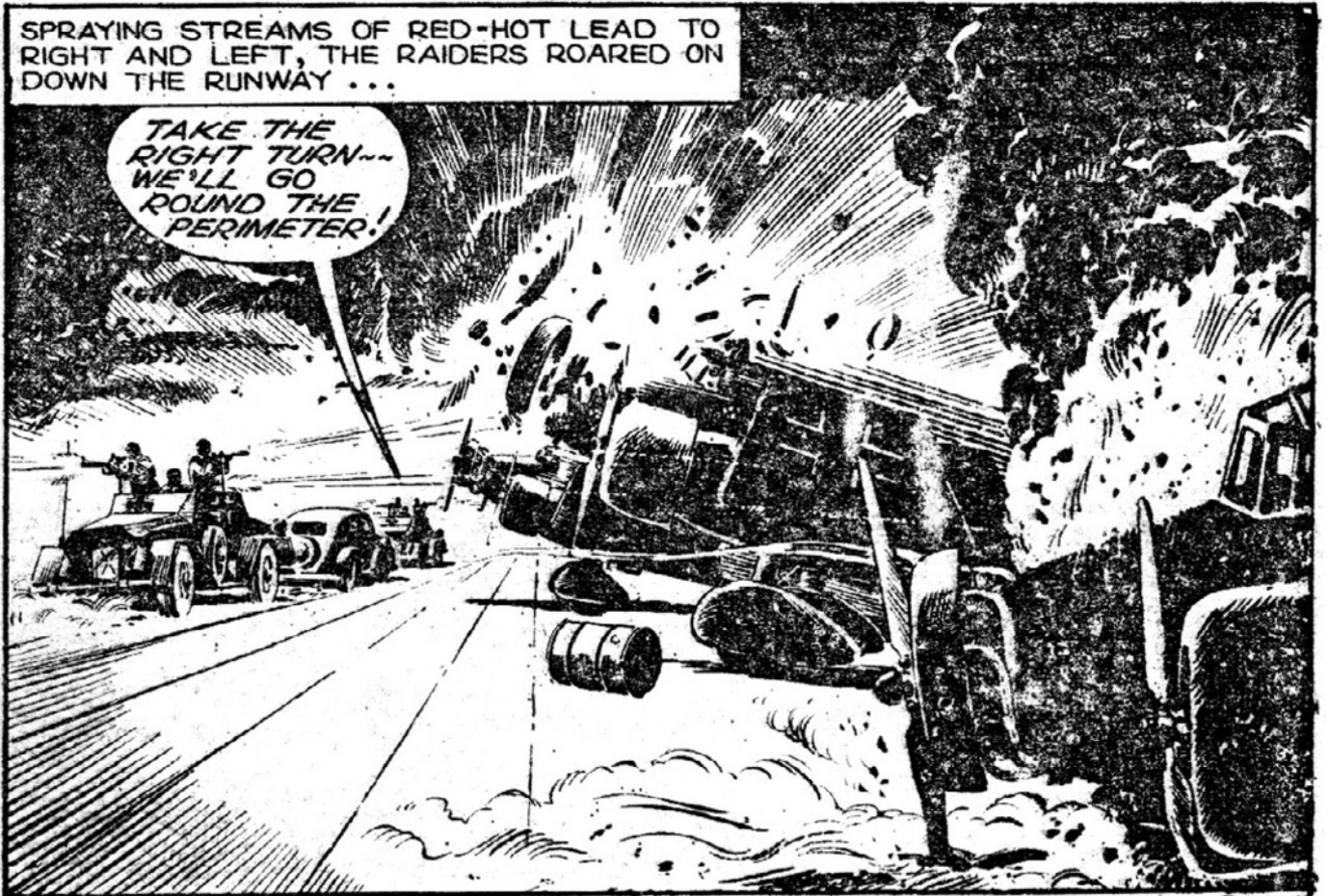
WITH THE MERCEDES BETWEEN THEM,
THE ESCORT CARS HURTTLED DOWN THE
TARMAC... AND OPENED UP WITH
EVERY GUN...



...FLAMING TRACER LANCED INTO
THE PARKED TROOP CARRIERS!

SPRAYING STREAMS OF RED-HOT LEAD TO RIGHT AND LEFT, THE RAIDERS ROARED ON DOWN THE RUNWAY ...

TAKE THE
RIGHT TURN--
WE'LL GO
ROUND THE
PERIMETER!



THE MAIN RUNWAY BEHIND THEM WAS LINED WITH BURNING, EXPLODING PLANES AS THEY SWUNG RIGHT--AND MORE TROOP CARRIERS WAITED, FAT AND HELPLESS ...

SLAM IT INTO 'EM!
THE JERRIES WILL GET
OVER THEIR SURPRISE
FAST--AND THEN WE'LL
BE IN THE MIDDLE OF
THEIR FIRE!



ALMOST AT ONCE GERMAN GUNS
OPENED UP FROM EVERY DIRECTION~~
BUT FEW OF THEM REALLY KNEW
WHAT WAS GOING ON... AND THEY
WERE SHOOTING BLINDLY...

THEY HAVEN'T FULLY
CAUGHT ON YET~~~
WE CAN STILL
PASTE 'EM WHILE
THEY'RE GROGGY!



THEN CHALKY SAW A HUGE PETROL
BOWSER SCUTTling AWAY FROM
THE TRACK AHEAD...

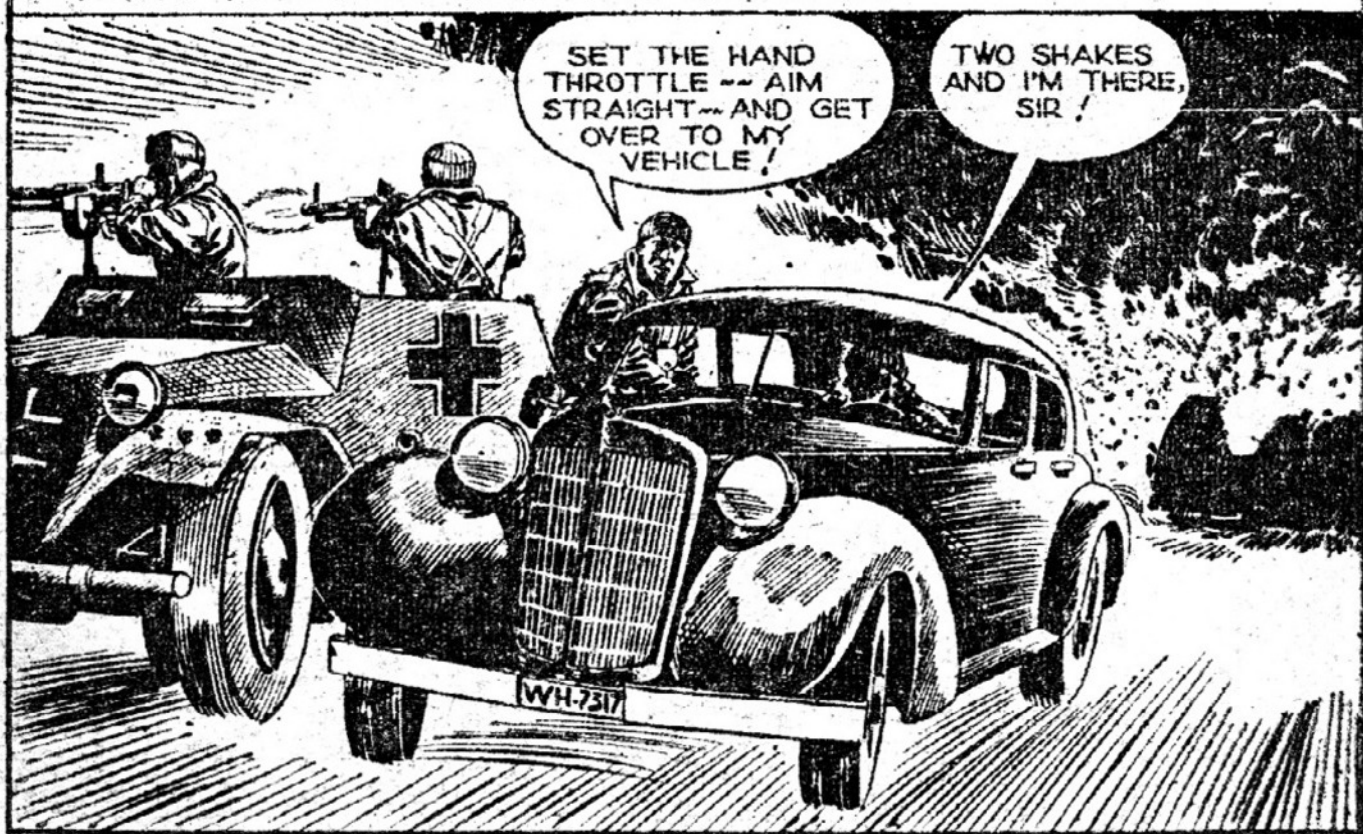
LEFT... LEFT...
THAT'S IT...
FIRE!

GOT THE
BRUTE!



Phantom Force Five

BY NOW THE WHOLE AIRFIELD WAS LIT AS IF BY DAYLIGHT FROM THE FLAMING WRECKS LITTERING THE TARMAC, AND CLIVE KNEW THAT THEY HAD LITTLE TIME LEFT. HE HAD ONE MORE CARD TO PLAY....



A FEW SECONDS LATER, THE DRIVERLESS MERCEDES STREAKED AWAY -- LOADED WITH ALL THE RAIDERS' EXPLOSIVE CHARGES!

WHEEL RIGHT -- WE'VE GOT TO BE WELL CLEAR WHEN IT HITS!



LIKE A MIGHTY BATTERING RAM, THE MERCEDES CRASHED INTO THE CONTROL BUILDINGS-- AND BLEW UP WITH SKY-SPLITTING THUNDER!

YOU SHOULD SEE YOUR MERCEDES NOW, CHUM -- I RECKON THAT YOU AND YOUR DRIVER IN THE OTHER CAR ARE BETTER OFF BEING SAT ON!

EVERYWHERE GERMAN GUNS WERE CHATTERING, TRYING TO PIN DOWN THE ELUSIVE RAIDERS WHO HAD TURNED THE AIRFIELD INTO A GRAVEYARD OF FLAME-SHROUDED PLANES. TOUGH PARATROOPS WERE FORMING DEFENCE LINES...

THEY'RE READY FOR US, LADS -- BUT, BY THUNDER, WE'LL SLAM OUR WAY THROUGH!



ALREADY SEVERAL OF THE RAIDERS HAD BEEN SLIGHTLY WOUNDED ~ BUT AT THAT MOMENT LUCK SEEMED TO DESERT THEM... AND DISASTER POUNCED!

LOOK, SIR ~
THEY'VE GOT
NUMBER TWO'S
DRIVER!

THEY'RE
STOPPING, BUT
WE'RE NOT
LEAVING THEM!
SWING BACK
TO THEM!



IN A TIGHT, SKIDDING TURN, CLIVE'S VEHICLE CIRCLED BACK TO THE STATIONARY CAR ~ AND TURNED TO MEET THE CHARGING PARATROOPS!

TEN SECONDS TO GET MOVING, CORPORAL ~ OR WE'LL BOTH HAVE HAD IT. THEY OUTNUMBER US TWENTY TO ONE!

RIGHT,
SIR!



THE MACHINE GUNS STUTTERED SAVAGELY ~ THEN THE GERMANS WERE TOO CLOSE. IN A GREY-CLAD WAVE THEY FLOODED AGAINST THE CAR...

AAAGH!

REMEMBER
KASOVANI,
FORCE
FIVE!

OOF!



THAT NAME RANG OUT ABOVE THE CLASHING, SLASHING MELEE LIKE A BATTLE CRY... AND THE MEN OF "FORCE FIVE" SEEMED TO GO BERSERK!

THAT'S FOR THE PALS WE LEFT IN CRETE!

AFTER THIS YOU APES WILL NEVER FORGET KASOVANI!

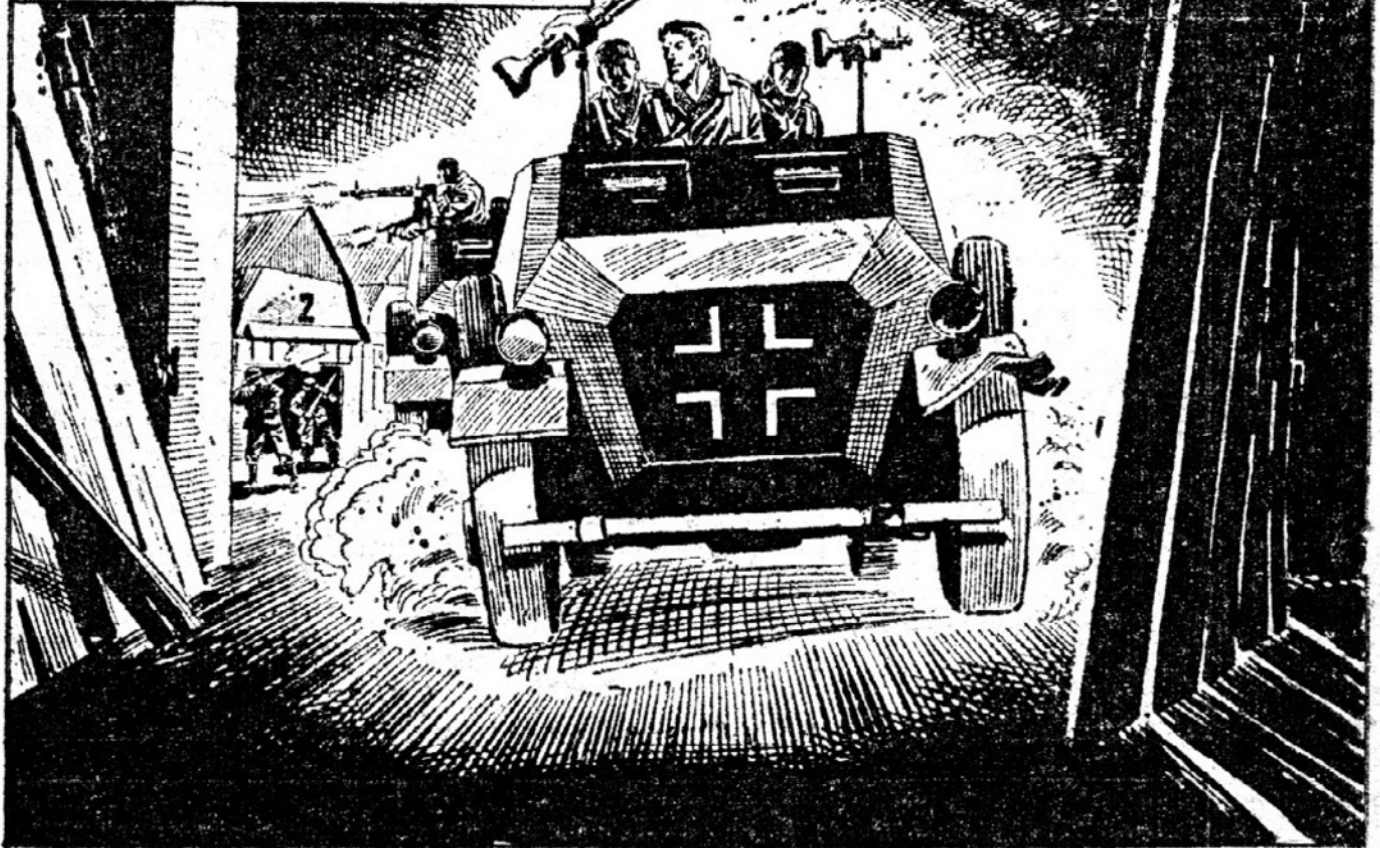


THEN A YELL CAME FROM CHALKY WHITE... AND HIS ENGINE BURST INTO LIFE AGAIN.. CLIVE SNAPPED AN ORDER... AND BOTH CARS ACCELERATED FORWARD...

MAKE FOR THE GATES... IT'S NOW OR NEVER!



LEAD WHINED THROUGH THE NIGHT ABOUT THEM AS THEY RACED BETWEEN BURNING PLANES -- AND SAW THE GATES -- **CLOSED!** BUT "FORCE FIVE" WERE STOPPING FOR NOTHING!



THE CARS FLED INTO THE CONCEALING DARKNESS...AND FOR ONE BRIEF SECOND, CLIVE LOOKED BACK...

IF ANY MAN HAD SAID WE'D COME OUT OF THAT ALIVE, I'D HAVE SAID HE WAS CRAZY -- AND HE WOULD BE!



AN HOUR AFTERWARDS THEY REJOINED THEIR ORIGINAL ESCAPE ROUTE -- WHICH LED THEM TO THE BEACH WHERE THEY HAD LANDED ...

THE DINGHIES ARE ALL RIGHT, CORPORAL -- NOBODY HAS SPOTTED THEM !

YOU KNOW, SIR -- AFTER THAT BARNEY BACK THERE I FEEL DARNED NEARLY FIT ENOUGH TO SWIM ALL THE FLIPPING WAY !

THEY HAD TO ABANDON THE BATTERED ESCORT CARS. RATHER REGRETFULLY THEY DROVE THEM INTO THE SEA.

PITY ABOUT THEM LITTLE BATTLE WAGONS, SIR -- THEY WERE JUST THE JOB, JERRY MADE OR NOT !

WELL, THEY'VE GIVEN ME A FEW IDEAS FOR FIXING UP SOME JEEPS -- FOR OUR NEXT MISSION !



THEY PADDED THE RUBBER BOATS OUT FROM THE BEACH TOWARDS THE RENDEZVOUS WITH THE SUBMARINE. RIGHT ON TIME, THE UGLY GREY SHAPE BROKE THE SURFACE ...

'MORNING, CLIVE. I SEE YOU GOT YOUR MAN. GOOD WORK! ANY FUN AND GAMES?

WE WERE DIVERTED SLIGHTLY, BUT NOTHING SERIOUS!

ONCE THE RAIDERS WERE ABOARD, THE NAVAL COMMANDER HEARD THE FIRST NEWS OF THE AIRFIELD ATTACK -- *FROM FIELD MARSHAL VON FLAGENHOST!*

YOU CAPTURE ME, THEN ATTACK AN AIRFIELD SWARMING WITH A DIVISION OF GERMANY'S FINEST TROOPS! YOU WRECK A HUNDRED AIRCRAFT, RUINING MY PLANS TO INVADE THE SUEZ CANAL -- AND YOU SAY IT WAS A SLIGHT DIVERSION! YOU ENGLANDERS ARE CRAZY!

IS THIS THE TRUTH, CLIVE?



SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE STILL ASTOUNDED SUBMARINE COMMANDER SENT CLIVE'S REPORT TO MALTA BY RADIO -- AND WITHIN AN HOUR IT WAS IN THE HANDS OF GENERAL SIR PATRICK HOLMES ...



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